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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2251  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3763  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1551  
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SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN: POLOFF AND LES FACE HARASSMENT IN  
NAKHCHIVAN

REF: BAKU 17

1. (SBU) At 1100 local January 13, a group composed of Poloff, a political LES and the DCM of the Norwegian Embassy in Baku were harassed by an angry crowd while visiting the village of Bananiyar in the autonomous exclave of Nakhchivan to investigate the events reported in Reftel. On approaching the village the private vehicle carrying the group was confronted by a mob of approximately 50 people. Some of the mob pounded on the car with their fists. Others shouted that the diplomats should leave, that everything is fine in the village, and that the United States should not support Armenia. After Poloff and the others exited the car, at least one of the crowd grabbed the LES. Plainclothes observers, likely from the local security service, took no/no action. No/no uniformed police were in the vicinity.

2. (SBU) After about ten minutes the group departed Bananiyar en route Abregunus (spelling approximate) village to meet with a Bananiyar resident who claimed that the crowd was not made up of Bananiyar residents. A contingent from the crowd followed them for the five-minute trip to the second village and continued the harassment. The group shortly departed for Nakhchivan city, the local capital.

3. (SBU) At 1600 local Poloff and the Norwegian DCM met with Ali Alizade, head of the "MFA" of Nakhchivan, to protest the incident. Alizade was unapologetic, claiming that the crowd must have formed spontaneously to protest the false reports that have appeared in the media about the Reftel events. The Norwegian DCM delivered a sharp protest and blunt reminder on his Ambassador's instructions of the duty of OSCE members to monitor each others' human rights performance and to accept such monitoring by fellow OSCE members. The Norwegian Ambassador plans to demarche MFA personally on 14 January; Charge will also personally protest the incident to the Presidential Administration 14 January. Poloff, Political LES and the Norwegian DCM are returning to Baku per their original plan in the late evening of 13 January.

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